

Could there be a link between Welsh rugby and papal deaths after all?

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There may be some truth in the saying "every time Wales win the rugby grand slam, a Pope dies" after all, despite a 2008 *BMJ* article dismissing it as an urban myth, claims a doctor in a letter to this week's *BMJ*.

This year saw the [death](#) of the Coptic pope, Shenouda III, on the very day that Wales won the grand slam, says Edward Snelson, a [paediatrician](#) at Sheffield Children's Hospital. He was pope for 41 years and succeeded Cyril VI, who died in 1971, in the same month that Wales won the grand slam again.

Snelson argues that the 2008 research included only Roman Catholic popes in its analysis thus creating "a potentially false reassurance" and says it is crucial that this new information be brought to the attention of other doctors.

He concludes: "Although the association between these deaths and the [sporting events](#) may not be fully understood, this research has created a false reassurance and may be putting the lives of other popes at risk."

More information: www.bmj.com

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